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CHAPTER 50 – AIRCRAFT

AIRCRAFT

Flight ordering, flight following, aviation resource tracking, air space restrictions, air communications, and air cargo deliveries will be managed through normal dispatch channels with order and request information communicated through the aircraft desks at the corresponding dispatch centers.

Units requiring aviation support other than the aircraft assigned to them through contracts, preapproved agreements or shared within their dispatch boundaries can use the closest forces doctrine and coordinate the ordering in IROC for short term utilization of additional IA aircraft with adjacent units. Coordination is facilitated through weekly unit aviation conference calls driven by local activity. When local and neighboring resources become exhausted, the units share aircraft through the coordination of NRCC. With increased activity NRCC requests all kneeboard forms for airtankers and leadplanes be sent to NRCC aircraft desk for situational awareness, prioritization, and further notification of national resource usage.

When incident activity levels require the activation of the Geographic Area Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (GMAC), they will monitor, coordinate and prioritize the assignment and movement of aircraft with NRCC. This is facilitated by a weekly interagency aviation unit conference call which includes all aviation units of the USFS, BLM, BIA, NPS, FWS, ID-IDL and MT-DNRC.

When the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) is activated, NMAC will monitor and coordinate the assignment and movement of federal and federally contracted aviation resources with NRCC and the GMAC. NMAC will assign aircraft based on national prioritization and availability of aircraft resources. This is accomplished by daily conference calls between all geographic area coordination centers. NMAC does not coordinate the use of state aircraft.

Cooperator Aircraft

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Cooperator aircraft such as State contracted, State owned, State managed National Guard aircraft, county, city or other:

- Use the Cooperator Aircraft Use Validation Worksheet to document the justification for cooperator aircraft utilization on federal fires if conditions are met on Worksheet: https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/coord_forms.htm
- Dispatch Centers must retain this form for 10 years in accordance with Forest Service Handbook 6209.11, Chapter 40.

AIRCRAFT MOBILIZATION

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Minimum Information Needed

Note: Aircraft Dispatch/Kneeboard form is acceptable for efficient initial attack mobilization followed up by an IROC resource order as soon as possible. IROC is the preferred method to

order all aircraft. The [NRCC Aircraft Dispatch/Kneeboard form](https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/avforms.htm) can be found under Aviation Forms on the NRCC website at <https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/avforms.htm>.

The following is the **minimum information needed** to process an initial attack aircraft request, such as rappeller, smokejumper, or airtanker.

- **Lat/Long**
- **Reload base**
- **Hazards**
- **Frequency**
- **Values at Risk and Timeframe of Threat** – must be entered in Special Needs and Kneeboard
- **Air or Ground Contact** - (prefer this info, if known, but should not hold up the order)
- **Descriptive Location** - (prefer this info, if known, but should not hold up the order)

AIRCRAFT DEMOBILIZATION

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Due to the limited number of aircraft available, release priorities will be discussed with NRCC 24 hours prior to demobilization. Generally, it is more cost effective to retain aircraft operating under exclusive use contracts.

FLIGHT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide regarding:

National Flight Following Frequency, Types of Flights (Point to Point, Mission), FAA Flight Plans and Flight following, Agency Flight Plans and Flight Following, Responsibilities, AFF Requirements and Procedures.

Purpose of Flight Following

- Safety and welfare of pilot and passengers; ensuring timely response for search/rescue operations when necessary.
- Single point of contact (sending unit) to check on flight status and for pilot/flight manager to notify of ATDs/ATAs.
- Resource tracking; confirmation of a resource's status and safety including cost-effective use of aircraft; an approved method by which the intended movement of a resource is documented and coordinated prior to departure, at completion of each leg, and upon arrival at destination.

Flight Following and Resource Tracking

The procedures for flight following apply to all government and federally contracted aircraft. Flight following must be properly established and maintained at regular intervals at all times, to be of value. Agency flight plans are the responsibility of the pilot, to be distributed through the originating dispatch office and are documented on an Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule. Flight following is the responsibility of the originating dispatch center and will remain so until transferred through a documented, positive handoff.

Receiving and intermediate dispatch centers will be involved in tracking the aircraft when requested by the sending unit or when the aircraft is overdue.

For point to point flights across dispatch or geographic area boundaries the pilot will file a flight plan with the FAA alleviating the need for local dispatch agency flight following. The pilot or flight manager will complete an Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule and will contact dispatch with ATD/ETE and ATAs to close out with dispatch once the aircraft is on the ground, to accomplish resource tracking.

Aircraft Flight Request/Schedules shall be completed and shared for flights leaving the local area, such as:

- admin/non-tactical flights
- tactical/mission flights leaving the local zone (if flight duration includes a scheduled stop for a tactical briefing, fuel stop or passenger transport en route to incident)

EXCEPTION: These procedures are not intended to affect tactical/mission flights where mandatory check-ins are required. Helicopters conducting mission flights shall check-in prior to and immediately after each takeoff/landing per IHOG.

Admin and Non-Tactical Flights

Admin and non-tactical flights transport resources (overhead, equipment, etc.) from one developed airport or permanent helibase directly to another developed airport or permanent helibase. This includes initial attack resources mobilizing to an incident on a flight of long duration with a scheduled stop for a tactical briefing, fuel stop or passenger transport en route to incident.

Sending Unit – The sending unit is the dispatch unit which sends the aircraft from the vendor or Government aviation unit.

Responsibilities of Sending Unit:

- Order an aircraft from vendor or agency that meets safety/performance requirements and cost effectiveness for transport of personnel/cargo. Ensure an Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule is filled out and share with those dispatch units involved. Per contract language, “pilots shall file, open, and operate on a FAA, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), or a FS or DOI-Bureau approved flight plan for all flights.”
- Assign a Flight Manager to ensure all personnel are properly briefed on flight following procedures and responsibilities as well as familiarize passengers with aviation safety requirements prior to being transported in fixed-wing or rotor-wing aircraft.
- Flight follow and resource track the aircraft to its final destination by communicating with the pilot/flight manager. Advise the pilot of any exceptions to routine flight following procedures; i.e., alternate telephone numbers, etc.
- Obtain ATD (Actual Time of Departure) from initial departure airport from pilot/vendor or flight manager.
- Communicate to NRCC through established ordering channels all aircraft flight schedules that cross unit/dispatch zone boundaries. Make sure the sending (originating) dispatch telephone number appears on the Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule.

- Notify NRCC of any delays/advances of a flight schedule exceeding 30 minutes.
- Initiate search procedures for overdue aircraft. Utilize the Interagency Aviation Mishap Guide as appropriate and notify NRCC of overdue aircraft.
- Notify agency Aviation Safety Officer and NRCC when pilot/flight manager do not comply with their responsibilities as outlined herein.
- Initiate an aircraft SAFECOM report if appropriate.

Note: It is intended that the primary contacts for the sending unit for locating/flight following/resource tracking will be: Pilot, Flight Manager, Flight Service Stations or other FAA facilities and/or destination airport Fixed Base Operators.

Receiving Unit – The Receiving Unit is the dispatch unit that is receiving resources.

Responsibilities of Receiving Unit:

- Notify the sending unit of any aircraft that has not arrived within 30 minutes of ETA. If problems are encountered contacting the sending/originating unit then contact NRCC.
- Assist in the search for overdue aircraft. Advise NRCC of action taken.

Mission Flights

Mission flights, such as helitack, smokejumper, leadplane/ASM, airtanker, cargo drop, reconnaissance and survey flights will be recorded on a resource order or agency Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule, if leaving the local zone. Pilots will confirm Automated Flight Following (AFF) or transmit position reports to the appropriate unit dispatcher every 15 minutes with latitude, longitude and heading while performing the mission. Flights which anticipate entering areas where radio communications are inadequate or are conducting operations at low level are expected to notify the monitoring dispatch center of their location, intentions and when to expect the next check-in. In these instances, a flight may not be out of radio contact for more than thirty minutes. Pilots will monitor assigned frequencies at all times. Mission flights may use National Flight Following frequency in conjunction with AFF or radio check-ins when either local or national frequencies are not available or have not yet been assigned.

When airtankers, leadplane/ASMs, smokejumper aircraft or helicopters check in with an Air Tactical Group Supervisor (ATGS) over an incident, they are no longer required to give position reports to a dispatch center. The ATGS is expected to give status reports on all aircraft under their control over an incident. When aircraft are released from an incident and the control of the ATGS, they must resume flight following with a dispatch center.

Sending Unit Responsibilities: For flights leaving the local zone, document the travel on the resource order or the Aircraft Flight Request/Schedule and share the ADTs and ETAs with the NRCC aircraft desk. Sending unit dispatcher will monitor and record aircraft progress with 15-minute position reports and notify NRCC if changes need to be made to the flight schedule. When aircraft leave the local area, the dispatcher will transfer the responsibility of further monitoring via a documented positive hand-off to the next dispatch center once radio communication and/or positive AFF has been established.

NRCC Responsibilities: Upon receipt of ADT and ETA from the sending unit dispatcher, NRCC

will pass aircraft information and ETA to the receiving unit.

Receiving Unit Responsibilities: Receiving unit will call the NRCC aircraft desk if aircraft have not arrived within 30 minutes of scheduled ETA.

Pilot Responsibilities:

- Assure positive AFF or that radio communication is established with a dispatch center at all times;
- Notify the previous area dispatcher that positive communication is established with the next dispatch area;
- Repeat this procedure each time flight following responsibility transfers;
- Close out with local dispatch once the flight is on the ground.

Local Unit - Mission Flights: Flight following within local units, or established zones with formal agreements, is the responsibility of the local unit/zone.

Automated Flight Following (AFF) Requirements and Procedures

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

AIRTANKERS

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

For a list of current airtankers on Federal Contract, *reference:*

https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/aviation/Federal_Contract_Air_Tanker_List.pdf.

Airtanker days off will be in accordance with contractual requirements. Units with airtanker bases will schedule the aircraft and pilot for duty from 09:00 until 18:00 local time. Sending and receiving dispatch units must be aware of time zone changes. Units will notify NRCC if other hours are scheduled such as: early morning fire activity, on call-back due to inclement weather, mechanical problems, etc. Airtankers may be dispatched using the Aircraft Dispatch/Kneeboard form followed up by an IROC resource order as soon as possible.

Sending units will notify NRCC with airtanker number, dispatch time, fire name, and location and include values at risk on an Aircraft Kneeboard form.

NRCC requests all kneeboard forms for airtankers and leadplanes be sent to NRCC aircraft desk for situational awareness, prioritization, and further notification of national resource usage.

Airtanker Management

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Airtanker Response Area

Each unit may order the first airtanker through standard dispatch channels from the dispatch unit for the closest airtanker base. This includes out-of-area bases covered by formal agreement. If the closest airtanker base cannot fill the request (airtanker currently committed or on day off), then the unit must place the request with NRCC. If a NR airtanker is requested

out-of-area for initial attack, the airtanker host unit must first call NRCC for coordinator approval to fill request.

When airtankers are ordered the following priority criteria must be provided in the comment section of the aircraft kneeboard and in the special needs block of the IROC aircraft resource order.

Values at Risk

- **Human Life:** Entrapment, Reinforce escape routes/safety zones, Other (Medivac, Highways, Recreation Areas)
- **Communities:** Community infrastructure, Historically significant cultural resources
- **Property:** Primary Residences, Seasonal Residences, Commercial property including timber/plantations, Outbuildings. Other (Livestock)
- **Natural Resources:** T&E Species, Wildlife Habitat, Grazing Allotments, Designated Critical Areas

Timeframe for Threat

Imminent, within the operational period, 24 hours, etc.

An airtanker may be ordered using the "[Minimum Information Needed](#)" as outlined in Aircraft Mobilization section of this chapter. Centers may be asked if there are currently resources on the ground to support orders for retardant or bucket drops.

At the end of shift all initial attack aircraft will be released in IROC to the appropriate base or a preposition order for a clean start on the next shift.

Airtanker Use in Optional and Post Season Periods

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Modular Airborne Firefighting Systems (MAFFS)

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

In the Northern Rockies, MAFFS can reload out of Helena, MT (HLN) and Billings, MT (BIL), with Boise, ID (BOI) Moses Lake, WA (MWH) and Rapid City, SD (RAP) as closest MAFFs hub-bases.

See map of MAFFs bases, https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/aviation/MAFFS_Bases.pdf

Water Scoopers/CL-415s

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Very Large Airtankers (VLATs)

In the Northern Rockies, VLATs can operate out of Helena, MT (HLN). Next closest VLAT bases are Moses Lake, WA (MWH) and Pocatello, ID (PIH).

MT-DNRC Airtankers

Reference the MT-DNRC section in this chapter

The Montana Department of Natural Resources (MT-DNRC) will solicit CWN contracts for large

airtankers, very large airtankers and Single Engine Airtankers. See NRCC Webpage for “Splash and Dash” procedures:

https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/DNRC_Quickstrike_Form.pdf

Single Engine Airtankers (SEATs)

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Idaho Department of Lands CWN SEATs and Amphibious Water Scoopers (AWS):

Idaho Department of Lands will solicit State CWN contracts for Single Engine Airtankers and Fire Boss aircraft where current needs dictate. Local units in Idaho requiring State aviation services will order additional services through local interagency dispatch centers utilizing established dispatch channels. A list of IDL’s CWN Aviation Price Agreements are posted under All-State Protection Agreements found on IDL’s Fire Management webpage at the following link:

<https://www.idl.idaho.gov/fire-management/incident-business/>

DOI National Exclusive Use (EXU) SEAT Contracts

Based on the number of DOI National Exclusive Use SEATs allocated to the GACC, the BLM State Aviation Manager (SAM) and BIA Regional Aviation Manager (RAM) will coordinate with fire staff and the Geographic Area Coordinating Group to determine the initial starting location of DOI EXU SEAT’s.

As National assets, DOI National EXU SEATs can and will be moved to areas of greatest need. On an interagency basis, within geographic areas, the fire staff will provide direction to the dispatch system on the mob/demob of SEATs to meet existing or forecasted fire loads within their jurisdiction.

DOI Fire On-Call Contracts

DOI Fire On-Call Contract requests for services will be placed with the contractor using standard dispatching procedures with an IROC aircraft resource order. Full consideration should be given to urgency, capability, location, availability and cost of the aircraft by the unit making the request. Pay attention to the on-call emphasis of “Best Value Determination”, there could be an audit on dispatch center documentation on why a vendor was hired.

The electronic OAS 23E will be utilized for tracking and documenting aircraft use by OAS and the requesting unit.

For further information contact your Unit Aviation Officer. The three-page AQD-91 Flight Request Form and the AMD-23E form can be found in a fill-in format at

<https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/avforms.htm>.

SMOKEJUMPERS AND SMOKEJUMPER AIRCRAFT

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Reference Chapter 20 of this Guide for Smokejumper numbers/gear/weights.

Smokejumpers are used for initial response (on all types of fires), implementing management actions on wildfires managed for resource or ecological benefit, implementing specific actions

on long duration wildfires and providing fire leadership.

Each unit may order smokejumpers through standard dispatch channels from the host dispatch center of the **closest smokejumper base** to the incident, as confirmed by computer software. This includes out-of-area bases covered by formal agreement. Smokejumpers may be dispatched using the Aircraft Dispatch/Kneeboard form followed by an IROC resource order as soon as possible. Order in IROC as an A#: Load, Smokejumper, Initial Attack. West Yellowstone smokejumper requests go to Bozeman Dispatch Center; Grangeville smokejumper requests go to Grangeville Dispatch and Missoula smokejumper requests go to NRCC, which are then placed to the Missoula Smokejumper Center (MSJC). If the closest smokejumper base cannot fill the request, then the unit must place the request with NRCC. **If smokejumpers are being requested for out-of-area, the host unit must call NRCC for coordinator approval.** With concurrence from NICC, smokejumpers that have been trained and assembled from the same base may be assigned as Type 1 Crews.

Initial Attack Smokejumpers may be ordered using **Minimum Information Needed** as outlined in *Chapter 50 of this Guide, Aircraft Mobilization, Minimum Information Needed*.

Smokejumper aircraft duty hours are normally from 09:30 to 18:00 local time. Neighboring dispatch units must be aware of time zone changes. If smokejumpers are needed for earlier hours the order should be placed the previous day. Units will notify NRCC when smokejumper aircraft are committed or unavailable for fire assignment due to mechanical issues, pilot duty limitations, etc. Units will notify NRCC before using the aircraft for other than smokejumper/para cargo use.

Smokejumper aircraft in the Northern Rockies are:

GIC	N83AR	"Jumper 1-4"	8 pax	TWIN OTTER	\$1350/hr
MSO	N537AR	"Jumper 1-1"	8 pax	TWIN OTTER	\$1325/hr
MSO	N161Z	"Jumper 6-1"	10 pax	SHORTS SD3-60	\$2650/hr
MSO	N162Z	"Jumper 6-2"	10 pax	SHORTS SD3-60	\$2650/hr
WYS	N263MC	"Jumper 1-3"	8 pax	DORNIER 228	\$1850/hr

LEADPLANES/AERIAL SUPERVISION MODULES (ASM)/AIR TACTICAL GROUP SUPERVISOR (ATGS)

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide and Interagency Aerial Supervision Guide.

Aircraft will identify themselves by make and aircraft "N" number except for those specialty aircraft with assigned agency identifiers. ASMs will identify themselves by their "Bravo" numbers and leadplanes by their "Lead" numbers.

Only qualified Leadplanes/ASMs and ATGSs will direct airtanker operations from the air, utilizing approved aircraft with mandatory communications equipment. Recon/air patrols will limit their proximity and instructions to identification of the correct fire and vacate the airspace prior to drop.

Dispatching

Leadplanes/ASMs, like airtankers, may be ordered through standard dispatch channels from the dispatch unit of the closest hosting air base as confirmed by computer software.

Leadplanes/ASMs may be dispatched using the Aircraft Dispatch/Kneeboard form followed up by an IROC resource order as soon as possible. If the closest airbase cannot fill the request, place the request through NRCC. It is expected that three leadplanes/ASMs will be based in Missoula.

NRCC requests all kneeboard forms for airtankers and leadplanes be sent to NRCC aircraft desk for situational awareness, prioritization, and further notification of national resource usage.

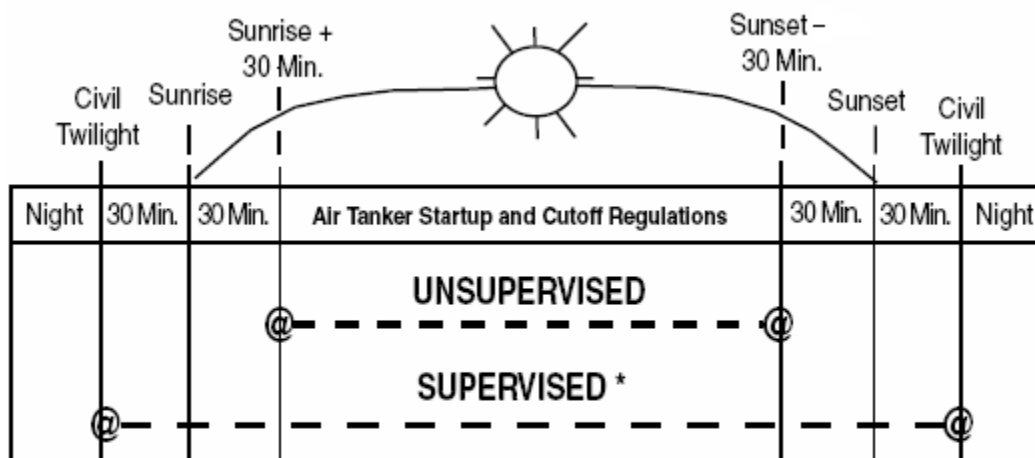
Leadplanes/ASMs assigned to alternate airbases will be dispatched by the dispatch center responsible for that airbase. For these aircraft, NRCC must approve all non-leadplane/air attack missions. When leadplanes/ASMs are dispatched, units will notify NRCC with leadplane/ASM number, fire name and location on a kneeboard form.

Leadplanes/ASMs will be released from incidents at the end of shift. Unlike airtankers, leadplanes/ASMs cannot be 'released to base' in IROC, therefore should be reassigned to a local preposition order and toggled available.

SUNRISE/SUNSET TABLES

The tables should be maintained at the local dispatch center and available as needed. Tables are available at: <https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/grad/solcalc/>

Startup/Cutoff Times - Airtanker Dispatch Limitations



@ = Arrival over the fire (no earlier in the morning or later than in the evening).

* = SUPERVISED (Defined as Air Tanker Coordinator or Air Tactical Group Supervisor).

Note: Sunrise and sunset are determined by the official sunrise and sunset tables of the nearest reload base.

To reduce the hazards to large airtanker operations posed by shadows in the early morning and late evening hours, limitations have been placed on times when airtankers may drop on fires.

Note: that the limitations apply to the time the aircraft arrives over the fire and conducts its dropping activity, not the time the aircraft is dispatched from its base. Dispatchers and ATB

Managers, in consultation with Leadplanes/ASMs or ATGSs, are mutually responsible for ensuring these limitations are not exceeded. The following shall apply:

Required Use

Air Tactical Group Supervisor/LP/ASM Required: A qualified Air Tactical Group Supervisor is required on scene if the airtanker's arrival over the fire and its dropping activity shall occur during:

- The period from 30 minutes prior to official sunrise to 30 minutes after official sunrise; or,
- The period from 30 minutes prior to official sunset to 30 minutes after official sunset.
- Retardant drops in populated/congested areas
- Use of Military Helicopters or Foreign Government Aircraft

Situations that may require a Leadplane/ASM/ATGS be ordered:

- Retardant drops on an ongoing fire utilizing three or more airtankers
- Retardant drops on a complex fire with a variety of air resources that may operate simultaneously (airtankers, smokejumper aircraft, and helicopters)
- When available within the Northern Rockies, a leadplane/ASM will be dispatched every time airtanker resources are dispatched to a fire, unless refused and documented by agency in charge.

Reference the Aerial Supervision Requirements in the [IASG Chapter 3, page 42](https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms505.pdf). At <https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms505.pdf>.

Initial attack by a qualified initial attack airtanker pilot should not be delayed, however, because of a lack of a leadplane/ASM in the area. In the event there is a shortage of leadplanes/ASMs, NRCC coordinator will assess the fire situation and Leadplane/ASM availability at that time and assign priorities. Where leadplanes/ASMs are appropriate but not available, ATGS shall be assigned in their place.

Only order aircraft carded for Air Tactical work. All patrol or recon aircraft must vacate air space over a fire to which initial attack aircraft have been dispatched.

Northern Rockies Geographic Area is committed to sharing ATGS resources amongst all IMTs, units, and dispatch centers. Interagency ATGS coordination positions are utilized to assist with this sharing and placement of ATGS resources.

- ATGS personnel affiliated with an IMT may be utilized for any assignment but will be reassigned if their respective IMT is activated CONTINGENT upon availability of a replacement ATGS resource. No reassignment will occur if replacement resources are not available.
- The FWOS will be utilized to assist with locating, moving, sharing, and placing aerial supervision resources. This position works closely with the NRC Aircraft Coordinators.

Strongly Recommended Use

- Utilize HLCO (Helicopter Coordinator) when available for helicopter coordination

- Units should utilize an ATGS in addition to a leadplane/ASM when:
 - Fire danger is very high to extreme
 - Two or more airtankers are dispatched to the same fire
 - Two or more mixed type and kind of aircraft are involved in a sustained air operation
 - Use of an ASM in a dual role (Leadplane and ATGS) is acceptable during initial attack operations but host units are encouraged to order an ATGS and fixed wing platform for extended operations.
 - Aviation resource prioritization is necessitated due to incident complexity or multiple incident responsibilities
 - Post-storm detection flights are conducted following storms with a high probability of having caused new ignitions. Consider ordering an ATGS and aerial observer in separate aircraft - ATGS works priority initial attack fires while aerial observer completes detection flight.

Optional Use

- **Aerial Supervision Optional:** Airtankers may be dispatched to arrive over a fire under agency aerial supervision policy, provided that the aircraft's arrival is between 30 minutes after official sunrise and 30 minutes before official sunset.

Prepositioning Air Tactical Group Supervisors for Initial Attack

Units should consider prepositioning an ATGS for initial attack when fire behavior analysts and meteorologists forecast above normal new fire starts and/or rapid fire spread with new starts.

Unit managers should plan in advance so that a rapidly escalating initial attack situation does not develop into an unsafe or inefficient operation. In particular, aerial observers should not be overloaded with tasks beyond their level of expertise. Aerial observers include people on detection flights or fire managers on reconnaissance flights.

In cases where an ATGS is assigned from out of the local area, efforts should be made to assign an individual familiar with the area and having knowledge of local fuel types and fire behavior to assist the ATGS with navigation and fire location. When an ATGS is assigned, every effort should be made to assign a trainee.

TACTICAL AND RECONNAISSANCE AIRCRAFT

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Attempts should be made to order exclusive use resources within the GACC before ordering call when needed resources or mobilizing aircraft from outside of the GACC. Specify all special needs such as twin engine, high wing, carded Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), flight into known icing conditions, pressurized, Traffic Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), radio package type (see National Interagency Mobilization Guide Chapter 50 – Tactical and Reconnaissance Aircraft, Air Tactical Avionics Typing chart), etc., in the special needs portion of the resource order and on the Kneeboard form.

HIRING ON USFS CWN CONTRACT VS DOI (OAS) CONTRACTS

Many Northern Rockies CWN aircraft vendors hold contracts with both DOI/OAS and the USFS

for each of their aircraft. Dispatch will document on the resource orders for federal incidents which contract (OAS or FS) the aircraft is hired under based on the agency having protection responsibility for that incident. Document the hiring under OAS contract for DOI incidents or FS contract for FS incidents.

HELICOPTERS

Helicopters: Call-When-Needed (CWN)

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

NICC is the sole source for federally contracted Type 1 and Type 2 CWN Helicopters. IROC orders for Type 1 or Type 2 helicopters for initial attack situations must specify this with values at risk and identify the helicopter manager's name and ETA to a marry-up point in special needs block.

Note: It is mandatory that all CWN helicopters and managers marry up at an off-incident site before the helicopter proceeds to an incident. A specific meeting place should be identified on the resource order, such as a Fixed Base Operator (FBO) or other easily located site. For information regarding mobilization of helicopter modules, see *Chapter 20 of this Guide, Helicopter Module*.

Prior to reassigning Type 1 or 2 CWN Helicopters to another incident, Dispatch Centers must obtain approval from NICC through NRCC.

Units may furnish/order Type 3 helicopter support to/from adjacent units/cooperators using the neighborhood policy. All other orders for helicopter support will be made through NRCC.

As a minimum for local use, a qualified helicopter manager will be dispatched with each Type 3 helicopter during the fire season. Individual agency helicopter staffing minimums may be higher/more restrictive and adherence to those minimums shall take precedence over any minimum set by this guide (*see IHOG Chapter 2*). The ordering unit may be required to furnish a qualified helicopter manager during any optional use period.

As a minimum for off-unit use, unless otherwise specified, the following will be dispatched with each Type 3 helicopter:

- Helicopter manager + two helicopter crew members (with PPE and radios)
- Service truck
- Bucket
- Cargo net
- Long-line

Idaho Department of Lands CWN Helicopters

Idaho Department of Lands will solicit State CWN contracts for both standard and limited Type 1, 2 and 3 helicopters as needed. Local units in Idaho requiring State aviation services will order additional services through local interagency dispatch centers utilizing established dispatch channels. A list of IDL's CWN Aviation Price Agreements are posted under All-State Protection

Agreements found on IDL's Fire Management webpage at the following link:

www.idl.idaho.gov/fire-management/incident-business/

MT-DNRC CWN and Type 2 EXU Helicopters

Reference the MT-DNRC section in this chapter

MT-DNRC T2S helicopters are not approved for use by federal agencies.

Type 1 and Type 2 Exclusive Use Helicopters

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Units with exclusive use helicopters can schedule hours of duty to meet their local needs.

Emergency Short-haul Operations

The emergency medical short-haul mission is intended to extract injured or ill personnel from an otherwise inaccessible location and transport them the shortest possible distance to another type of medical transportation (ground ambulance, EMS/life flight or internal in an agency helicopter).

Northern Rockies hosts two T3S short-haul helicopters, N401HQ in Helena, MT and N173BH at Yellowstone National Park. For more information contact Josh Ingle, Central Montana Helicopter Program Manager 406-495-3833. Short-haul helicopters are ordered through standard dispatch procedures. Identify the need for a short-haul helicopter on the kneeboard form and in the special needs block in IROC.

Maps depicting current short-haul helicopter locations and 100-mile effective response circles can be found by logging in to the [Enterprise Geospatial Portal \(EGP\)](https://egp.nwcg.gov/egp/default.aspx) at <https://egp.nwcg.gov/egp/default.aspx>, select the Air layer, open the Layers icon to select the Short-haul locations (blue circles are updated within past 26 hours, gray circles are older).

The Interagency Emergency Helicopter Extraction (EHE) Source list can be found at:

<https://www.nwcg.gov/committee/hshu-ehe>

Ordering a Short-Haul Helicopter for Emergency Medivac:

- Ordering units may order a short-haul helicopter by placing a call direct to the current helicopter manager or their hosting dispatch center. Ordering units or incidents must supply the information on a kneeboard form to facilitate an emergency response.
- Additional patient information may be obtained using the [Medical Incident Report \(i.e. 8-Line, ICS-206WF\)](https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/Search%20and%20Rescue%209%20Line%20Kneeboard%20Form.pdf), linked on the NRCC Aviation Forms page <https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/Search and Rescue 9 Line Kneeboard Form.pdf>
- A request for short-haul will be processed by the host dispatch center or hosting IMT as a priority emergency response.
- The host dispatch center will contact the controlling GACC whenever a short-haul mission is launched.
- Short-haul extraction can occur only during daylight flight hours.

All short-haul operations will comply with the following policy:

- NPS: Helicopter Short-haul Handbook
- FS: Emergency Medical Short-haul Operations Plan

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Helicopters

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) helicopters are available throughout the NRGAs. **EMS helicopters may be ordered by a local unit from the closest available source.** Payment for EMS helicopters used to transport government employees (state and federal) is covered under Workers' Compensation Programs (APMC, OWCP, etc.). *Refer to the Interagency Incident Business Management Handbook (NWCG Handbook #2) for specifics.*

Emergency medical helicopter services for private citizens should be coordinated through local law enforcement officials and/or the local line officer.

When hosting an Incident Management Team on a local unit, the ordering of EMS aircraft should be discussed at the in-briefing or in the delegation of authority.

Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic (MAST) Helicopters

MAST helicopters can be ordered for emergency extraction using a hoist system. These helicopters can be dispatched with a flight surgeon, if requested, or may be used in conjunction with EMS helicopters. Dispatch procedures for ordering MAST services:

- Use the Military ONLY when private/contract services are not available
- The use of MAST helicopters for assisting in the search and rescue for downed aircraft is coordinated through the AFRCC, Tyndal AFB, FL 800-851-3051 (Official Use Only) and the MT Aeronautics Division, 406-444-9568.
- Use the EMS Helicopter Ambulance Request Information form in Chapter 80 Forms of this Guide, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Helicopter Ambulance Request Information. Orders for MAST services can go directly to the AFRCC or be made through NRCC which will contact the AFRCC at Tyndal AFB, FL with mission information.
- Determine radio frequencies to be utilized and flight following procedures. Some military helicopters are restricted to VHF-AM communications. An agency aerial platform may be a necessary link for flight following communications.
- The use of MAST helicopters for private citizens will normally be initiated by local law enforcement officials coordinated with the local line officer. The role of NRCC will be one of advice, assistance and support.

Military MAST services available in the NRGAs:

Fairchild AFB, Spokane WA. 36th Rescue Squadron: UH1N helicopters (Bell 212) available with 240 feet of hoist cable and winch system.

- Contact Phone Numbers: 509-247-2428 (-2427) Ops Desk; 800-851-3051 call Tyndal AFB

Malmstrom AFB, Great Falls, MT. 40th Helicopter Squadron: UH1N helicopters (Bell 212) available with 250 feet of hoist cable and winch system.

- Contact Phone Numbers: 406-731-3250 or 3257 (0730-1700); 406-731-3801 Command Post (24/7)

Montana National Guard Helicopters

The Montana National Guard (Helena, MT) has UH60 Blackhawk helicopters and CH47 Chinook helicopters that may be available to support emergency operations. These aircraft are ordered through NRCC to the Montana Emergency Operations Center only after conventional sources for helicopter resources have been exhausted and emergency declarations authorizing their use issued by the Governor of the State of Montana are in effect.

Contact Phone Numbers:

- Joint Operations Center - 24 hours 406-324-3170
- Army Aviation Support Facility – 406-324-5776 or 5775 (Flight Ops Specialist)
- Montana Department of Emergency Services (DES)
 - Administrator 406-324-4766, fax 406-324-4790
 - 24 hours 406-324-4777

MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & CONSERVATION (DNRC) AIRCRAFT

Montana State Aircraft are not approved for use by federal agencies. Under emergency circumstances, where human life is immediately at risk by wildfire on federal lands under federal protection, a federal line officer can approve the use of non-federally approved aircraft to address the immediate threat. This exemption must only take place when sufficient federal firefighting aircraft are not readily available to meet the emergency need. Line officers are encouraged to consult with their agency aviation management personnel to aid in decision-making. The utilization of State of Montana public use aircraft on federal protection is regulated by public law 103-411. The Cooperator Aircraft Use Validation Form must be completed for each response on federal lands:

https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/logistics/coord_forms/Cooperator%20Aircraft%20Use%20Validation%20Worksheet.pdf

Montana State aircraft are defined as all aircraft owned and/or operated by the state and all aircraft procured under a state contract or agreement. This includes aircraft mobilized for wildfire through the Memorandum of Agreement between the Montana Department of Military Affairs, Montana Army National Guard and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conversation, Forestry Division, through the Northwest Wildland Fire Protection Agreement (Northwest Compact), CWN contracts, and through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

DNRC may use aircraft that have not been identified as an “Approved Cooperator Aircraft” on federal lands when and where the state is the protecting agency in a reciprocal or off-set agreement or when state lands are threatened, and the state maintains operational control of the aircraft.

The following conditions apply for State aircraft:

- No federal employees are allowed to ride on the aircraft.
- No federal employee may be assigned to a position that exercises contractual control.
- They are approved to have federal personnel load retardant at federal airtanker bases, regardless of jurisdiction.

- Federal personnel may provide aerial supervision (ATGS, ASM, HELCO, Leadplane) under existing standard procedures and agreements.
- They remain under state operational control regardless of the agency affiliation of the firefighters directing the aircraft on an incident with state jurisdiction.
- They are approved to interact with federal dispatch personnel as long as the aircraft remains under the operational control of the state.
- As exemptions are exercised, they must be documented by the approving federal line officer in accordance with their agencies guidance to include submitting a SAFECOM within 24hrs.

Pre and Post Field Assignment time period (October – May):

Schedule the use of DNRC aircraft directly with the Air Operations Section of the Fire Protection Bureau (FPB) at 406-444-0747.

Non-wildfire mission flights (i.e., radio repeater work, wildlife surveys, etc.) by DNRC helicopters are subject to certain limitations. Unless you are scheduling the flight in support of an emergency situation, please do so far enough in advance to avoid delays caused by mission restrictions, maintenance, pilot availability, or other routine activities.

Operating procedures for Montana Army National Guard aircraft are outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement between the Montana Department of Military Affairs, Montana Army National Guard and the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conversation, Forestry Division.

DNRC Aircraft and Duty Stations

DNRC fixed-wing aircraft and duty stations during field assignments:

Duty Station	Aircraft
Central Land Office – Helena	68M – Cessna 182
Southwestern Land Office – Missoula	12B – Cessna 182
Northwestern Land Office – Kalispell	91M – Cessna 185

Table 22: DNRC fixed-wing aircraft

DNRC direct protection helicopters and duty stations during field assignments:

- The DNRC maintains five MT205 helicopters and two Bell 206III Jet Rangers. These aircraft can be assigned to any of the locations listed below.

Duty Station	Aircraft
Central Land Office – Helena	Helicopter – MT205
Southwestern Land Office – Missoula	Helicopter - MT205
Northwestern Land Office – Kalispell	Helicopter – MT205
Southern Land Office - Billings	Helicopter – MT205

Table 23: DNRC Helicopters

- DNRC statewide resource helicopters and duty stations

Duty Station	Aircraft
Various. Located in Helena, Host Dispatch HDC	Helicopter – MT205

Various. Located in Helena, Host Dispatch HDC	Helicopter – Bell 206III Jet Ranger
Various. Located in Helena, Host Dispatch HDC	Helicopter – Bell 206III Jet Ranger

Table 24: DNRC statewide helicopters and duty locations

Fixed Wing Aircraft

The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation operates three single engine fixed-wing aircraft. Fixed wing aircraft are statewide resources and may be considered the closest resources for all incidents under State of Montana fire protection responsibility.

Helicopters

DNRC helicopters are State of Montana resources and may be considered the closest resources for all incidents under State of Montana fire protection responsibility. DNRC helicopters may be requested for initial attack operations or to support state fire incidents. The availability of these resources may be affected by statewide fire activity, individual DNRC land office/interagency mobilization levels, pilot availability, aircraft repair & maintenance, or other considerations.

Once DNRC aircraft and pilots are assigned to field assignment duty stations for wildland fire response, the coordination and dispatching for these aircraft is the responsibility of the respective DNRC Land Office via the aircraft's Field Assignment Dispatch Center. Daily availability and status will be reported through normal dispatch channels. Aircraft may be unavailable for use outside the field assignment location.

DNRC fire managers may order Field Assignment helicopters 88M, 87M, and 94M directly and for local assignments using procedures established locally between the DNRC Land Office and the Field Assignment Dispatch Center. These helicopters may be dispatched to other DNRC field offices with approval from the Area Fire Manager or his/her designated representative (duty officer).

Ordering DNRC Statewide Helicopters

Statewide resource helicopters are assigned to a Host Dispatch Center. Unlike helicopters assigned to a field assignment location the duty station of the Statewide Resource Helicopters will be the DNRC Aviation Support Facility in Helena unless requested and moved under a preposition order. The Host Dispatch Center will work with the aircraft's assigned helicopter manager or directly with the DNRC Aviation Support Facility to obtain and report availability status. The Host Dispatch Center for DNRC statewide resource helicopters is Helena Dispatch Center.

1. Check aircraft availability with the Aircraft's Host Dispatch Center.
2. The Air Operations Section will maintain ongoing discussions with the FPB to establish aircraft use priorities and other considerations in the use of Statewide Resource helicopters. Requests are coordinated by the Fire Bureau Duty Officer. The FPB must authorize the use of the aircraft.
3. Order the DNRC helicopter through your zone dispatch center. Dispatch will initiate a resource order with a name request for the specific aircraft and place it through a direct order to the aircraft's host dispatch center or field assignment dispatch center. If the ordering dispatch is the host dispatch center, they may initiate a resource order and fill it locally with the DNRC Statewide Resource helicopter but must first make contacts as described in #2 above.

- a. If this is a mission flight for a Montana DNRC incident, ensure the order is on a Montana DNRC incident number.
 - b. DNRC Statewide Resource Helicopters may be dispatched to an initial incident with minimal information provided via a phone call, local aircraft request form, etc. The basic information that will be provided should try to include geographic location of incident, incident name, contact name and frequencies. If the resource is being sent outside of the host dispatch centers zone, the initial order should be followed up with an IROC order as soon as possible.
4. Orders for statewide resource helicopters will generally be filled on a “first-come-first-served” basis unless circumstances concerning the statewide fire situation dictate otherwise.
5. Depending on fire danger and other circumstances, a helicopter designated as a statewide resource may be ordered under a DNRC preposition resource order. Orders for this helicopter, while deployed on the pre-position order, are placed to the pre-position dispatch center.
6. DNRC will make every effort to staff the statewide resource helicopters with a helicopter manager and module. To order one of the remaining statewide resource helicopters the ordering incident must provide or request appropriate helicopter management and support personnel. A complete helicopter module is not required for dispatch. However, a helicopter manager must be assigned to and meet the aircraft prior to arrival at the incident.
7. During initial action, all agencies (federal, state, local, and tribal) accept each other’s operating standards. Once the incident jurisdiction is clearly established, the standards of the agency with jurisdiction prevail. In the case of a wildfire under State of Montana fire protection responsibility employing federal personnel, the ordering incident must provide a NWCG Certified helicopter manager and helicopter module.

Flight following for VFR administrative aircraft use:

Schedule an administrative flight with the Air Operations Section of the Fire Protection Bureau (406-444-0747). The ordering official must work with the pilot to provide the information needed to file a VFR flight plan with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). As the flight itinerary progresses the pilot will make departure and arrival contacts with the flight service station in accordance with this flight plan.

If this flight occurs during the field assignment time period, make sure to coordinate aircraft use with the field assignment dispatch center so dispatch is aware that the aircraft will be in use and flying under a FAA VFR Flight Plan. Flight following with zone dispatch centers for DNRC administrative flights is not required unless requested by the pilot or chief of party.

Questions regarding State of Montana aircraft should be addressed to Chuck Brenton, DNRC Chief Pilot, 406 444-0747 or John Monzie FPB 406-542-4220.

Montana DNRC Aerial Supervision Guidelines

DNRC Multiple Helicopter Operations: To facilitate safe and efficient use of aviation assets that are operating on State and/or County protection or under the operational control of the DNRC which includes responses to boundary fires, the following will occur.

1. During multiple helicopter operations a DNRC Flight Lead will become the Air Mission Commander (AMC) and coordinate with the Incident Commander (IC) and assist in the control of the rotary wing resources.
2. When multiple helicopters are operating on the same incident, a DNRC pilot will assume the responsibilities as a Flight Lead. This Flight Lead platform will continue tactical operations on the incident with the other aircraft to facilitate and maintain safe air operations.
3. When fixed wing airtankers or any non DNRC aircraft are ordered an Air Attack or Lead Plane/ASM resource will be ordered for the incident.
4. Army National Guard helicopters require aerial supervision for all operations on staffed fire line. This requirement may be met by operating in tandem with DNRC helicopters or through the use of a helicopter coordinator (HLCO) and/or air attack. Army National Guard helicopters may operate on unstaffed fire line without aerial supervision.

Note: DNRC aircraft mentioned above include Army National Guard helicopters, helicopters ordered through the Northwest Compact and helicopters that are contracted by DNRC.

LARGE TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

NICC will arrange large transport aircraft on a per mission basis. NIFC aircraft or large transport aircraft use the following Northern Rockies jetports:

State	Identifier	Pick Up/Drop Off points
ID	COE	Needs 48hr notice Resort Aviation 208-772-3731
ID	LWS	Lewiston-Nez Perce County Airport 208-746-7962
MT	BIL	Edwards Jet Center 406-252-0508
MT	BTM	Butte Aviation 406-494-6694
MT	BZN	Yellowstone Jet Center 800-700-5381
MT	GPI	Check with Kalispell Dispatch 406-758-5260
MT	GTF	Holman Aviation 406-453-7613
MT	HLN	Exec Air 406-442-2190
MT	MSO	Main Terminal (East Side) or Golf Taxiway 406-728-4381
MT	WYS	Yellowstone Aviation 406-646-7359 (seasonal)
ND	BIS	Main Terminal 701-355-1808 day / 701-220-9885 24hr
ND	FAR	Fargo Jet Center 701-235-3600 or 800-770-0538
ND	MOT	Minot General Aviation & Refueling Office 701-857-4738
WA	GEG	Signature Flight Support 509-455-5204, answering service after hrs

Table 25: Jetports, Large Transport

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (UAS)

UAS (also referred to as drones) are considered aircraft and therefore must adhere to host agency policy. UAS include any aircraft used for flight with no onboard pilot. UAS missions must be approved in advance prior to use on any USFS/DOI/State agency projects (to include fire/incidents/prescribed fire, BAER, etc.). *Reference the NWCG Standards for Fire Unmanned*

Aircraft Systems Operations at:

<https://www.nwcg.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pms515.pdf>

Reference the CWN contract, incident ordering procedures and contact information for the interagency UAS Coordinator (<https://sites.google.com/a/firenet.gov/interagency-fire-uas/program/our-staff>) on the Interagency Fire UAS Website (<https://sites.google.com/a/firenet.gov/interagency-fire-uas/incident-toolbox>.

DOI and USFS and State UAS policy and operational guidelines for use of UASs is dynamic and expect differences in agency policies:

- *UAS flights under USFS operational control must adhere to USFS policy and regulations: <https://www.fs.fed.us/science-technology/fire/unmanned-aircraft-systems>. Also refer to the UAS Desk Guide at: https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/USFS_UAS_Desk_Guide.pdf.*
- *UAS flights under DOI operational control must adhere to DOI policy and regulations: <https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/opm-11.pdf>.*
- *UAS flights under MT-DNRC operational control must adhere to MT-DNRC policy and regulations: <http://dnrc.mt.gov/divisions/forestry/fire-and-aviation>.*
- *UAS flights under ID-IDL operational control must adhere to the ID-IDL policy and regulations: <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/fire/index.html>*

In the event of an unexpected UAS intrusion on Wildfires or projects; refer to the Script for Reporting a UAS situation to the FAA's ATRCC:

https://gacc.nifc.gov/swcc/dispatch_logistics/dispatch/mobguide/Attachments/Reporting%20UAS%20Situation%20ARTCC%20Script.pdf

An example of agency-use UAS flight following:

1. Pilot will call the local AC desk in advance of the mission and advise of pilot name, UAS tail number, expected flight time, location (lat/long and descriptive), and contact frequency. Flight level should never exceed 400' AGL.
2. Pilot will call on radio when operations commence and give tail number and descriptive location.
3. Pilot will call on radio when operations are complete.

UAS flights are flight followed locally. ACDP will notify other aircraft in the area of any UAS activity, making announcement on radio frequencies as necessary. ACDP will log UAS flight information in the appropriate related WildCAD Incident.

AIRBORNE THERMAL INFRARED (IR) FIRE MAPPING AND DETECTION

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

IR mission requests should arrive at NRCC by 15:00 MDT to ensure adequate time for flight planning. *Reference the NRCC Aviation website for additional infrared options:*

<https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/aviation.htm>.

Infrared Aircraft

When completing the online IR Scanner Order form *reference the National Infrared Operations*

(NIROPs) website for step by step instructions: <https://fsapps.nwcg.gov/nirops/>. NICC will coordinate all assigned Infrared Interpreters (IRIN) when the national IR Coordinator has been assigned. As a 'rule of thumb' when defining the coordinates of the Scan Box use a one-mile perimeter outside the boundary of the fire.

TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS FAR 91.137 (TFR)

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Always order a temporary discrete FAA VHF-AM Air to Air frequency for each TFR – do not use a zone IA AM frequency.

Temporary Flight Restrictions will be ordered through IROC from NRCC as an A#: Service – Aviation. The Interagency Request for TFR form can be found at <https://gacc.nifc.gov/nrcc/dispatch/aviation/avforms.htm>. All TFR requests shall be accompanied by a request for a discrete Air to Air AM Frequency for the incident.

In order to better manage air space and to enhance aviation safety over an incident or project, the Federal Aviation Administration may be requested to issue a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) which is generally issued as a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) (Refer to the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide, Chapter 6 for details pertaining to airspace restrictions). Aircraft in flight should report TFR violations to the Air Route Traffic Control Center (ARTCC) from which the TFR had been issued. Be prepared to give the following information: NOTAM number, aircraft type, color, N number, and altitude if known. Have the incident Safety Officer or Unit Aviation Officer report the intrusion to the Flight Standard District Office (FSDO) as well as file a SAFECOM:

MT	Helena FSDO	800-457-9917
ID	Boise FSDO	208-387-4000
ND	Fargo FSDO	701-492-5800
WA	Spokane FSDO	509-532-2340

Whenever there are flight restrictions in effect in the NRGAs, NRCC will send a daily Aviation Summary to dispatch centers which includes NOTAM #, latitude/longitude, radius, elevation and contact radio frequency for each restriction.

News Media Aircraft

Refer to the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide (Chapter 6) for details governing media flights into restricted airspace over an Incident.

MILITARY TRAINING ROUTES AND SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

Reference the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.

Dispatch centers will ensure airspace deconfliction is completed daily.

REPOSITIONING AIRCRAFT DUE TO VISIBILITY CONCERNS

Zone aircraft dispatchers, in coordination with NRCC and aviation managers, will be proactive in

repositioning aircraft when unfavorable flight conditions are forecasted which could ground aviation resources. It is the pilot's ultimate responsibility to ensure conditions are favorable prior to any flight.

AIRSPACE CONFLICTS

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.
Reference the Interagency Airspace Coordination Guide.

FAA TEMPORARY CONTROL TOWER OPERATIONS

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide.

DEDICATED RADIO FREQUENCIES

Reference the National Interagency Mobilization Guide

Communications/Frequencies

Aircraft will identify themselves by make and aircraft "N" number except for those specialty aircraft with assigned agency identifiers. ASMs will identify themselves by their "Bravo" numbers and leadplanes by their "Lead" numbers.

Mission aircraft such as smokejumper, air tactical and those used for fire detection will have an aeronautical VHF-FM Transceiver and two VHF-AM radios, one of which must be 760 channels.

The Northern Rockies Geographic Area has been divided into 14 Initial Attack Communication Zones (IACZ). The boundaries of these zones are closely aligned with initial attack areas for the dispatch centers that manage each frequency. The zone boundaries and frequencies are printed on the IACZ map distributed by NRCC and NIICD. Copies of the map are available from each dispatch center and NRCC.

The initial attack frequencies for each IACZ is assigned by the NIICD Communications Duty Officer annually and managed by a designated local dispatch center. VHF- AM assignments are used for air-to-air communications and are authorized only within the zone to which assigned. IA frequency assignments are not dedicated to incidents.

The IACZ assignments are:

DISPATCH CENTER	Zone #
ID-CDC	ID06
ID-GVC	ID07
MT-KIC	MT01
MT-MDC	MT02
MT-DDC	MT03
MT-GDC/MT-HDC	MT04
MT-BZC	MT05
MT-LEC	MT06
MT-BDC	MT07

MT-MCC	MT08
ND-NDC	ND01
ND-NDC	ND02
ND-NDC	ND03
ND-NDC	ND04

Table 26: IACZ Managing Dispatch Center

Procedure to Obtain Additional Frequencies

When aircraft communications overload the existing fire and air operations frequencies, temporary emergency frequencies may be ordered. These temporary emergency frequencies are ordered through NRCC as an A# in IROC.

No tactical aircraft (airtankers, leadplanes/ASMs, air tactical aircraft, smokejumper/para cargo aircraft, helicopters, etc.) will operate (or continue to operate) on incidents without proper radio communications.

Air Guard

Air Guard (168.625 MHz, TX Tone 110.9) is a national frequency utilized to contact aircraft while in flight. Air Guard shall be constantly monitored by a dedicated receiver in all aircraft in the vicinity of an incident as well as the assigned VHF-AM frequency. Scanning of Air Guard is not acceptable.

A separate receiver in the aircraft permits monitoring of this frequency at all times to accomplish quick reaction to emergency or changing conditions. Base stations and repeaters require specific approval and a radio frequency assignment (168.625 MHz) at each location. Fire cache portables have this frequency on channel 14 for the purpose of emergency correction of aerial delivery, aerial evacuation and general safety. Ground-to-ground or other daily routine operational use of this frequency is prohibited.

Conditions for use of Air Guard are:

- Genuine emergency use between aircraft and between fire ground crews and aircraft.
- To correct or update critical navigation and/or communication information.
- Emergency contact with aircraft to identify proper frequency.
- Long distance dispatch/recall/redirection of aircraft that have exceeded range of other dispatch capabilities.

Boundary Zone Air Operations

Incidents that occur on or near dispatch jurisdiction boundaries require increased coordination and management emphasis for integrated air operations concerning flight routes, TFRs, resource assignments, and communications/frequency assignments.

The priority concern in a boundary fire situation involving aircraft is to first ensure airspace safety. Determining the exact location, fire behavior or additional resource needs should be secondary to this principle. The following measures are critical to the safety of air resources.

Boundary Zone Airspace Coordination Plan

To mitigate the inherent mid-air danger of multiple aircraft sharing the same airspace while on different radio frequencies; and in recognition that this situation is potentially created whenever aircraft operate near the often-invisible boundaries of different assigned frequency zones; aircraft and dispatch centers will implement the following procedures:

- A “boundary zone” (example: 2 nautical miles) on each side of dispatching jurisdiction boundaries should be pre-identified by depiction on Flight Hazard Maps.
- Prior to entering the boundary zone, aircraft will notify their respective dispatch center of their intent to enter the boundary zone. Aircraft will not enter the boundary zone until they have been assured that any airspace conflicts have been mitigated.
- Dispatch will contact the adjoining unit/agency dispatch to notify of aircraft under their control within the boundary zone, request location information on any adjoining unit aircraft in the area and relay locations of other adjacent aircraft.
- Aircraft will confirm their location while within this boundary area through normal flight following procedures with dispatch.
- Aircraft within the boundary zone will monitor VHF-AM Multicom frequency (122.900) for initial contact with other aircraft. This use of Multicom is to provide a common Air-to-Air frequency for all aircraft, including general aviation, but is not intended for use as a tactical frequency. Pilots are also encouraged to provide occasional call-in-the-blind position reports on 122.900.
- When aircraft are flight following at a local level (i.e. district or incident) the local area contact shall contact the local dispatch center informing them of the status of boundary zone flight operations. The local dispatch center shall then inform the adjacent dispatch center of the boundary zone operations.
- Aircraft within boundary areas should also be provided assigned Air-to-Air and Air-to-Ground frequencies of the adjoining unit/agency.
- It is critical for adjoining dispatch centers to identify as soon as possible which unit’s tactical frequencies (both A-A and A-G) or discrete frequencies will be assigned for use on those incidents which are near, on or overlap unit boundaries.
- Dispatch centers will notify adjoining dispatch centers when the status of an incident changes (i.e., change in number of aircraft, TFR requests).
- Agency aircraft that do not have avionics capability to utilize Multicom or adjoining unit Air-Air frequencies or cannot establish radio contact for any other reason with aircraft known to be in the vicinity, shall immediately withdraw from the area.

Units Sharing A Boundary with Another Administrative Unit Shall Implement the Following When Appropriate:

- When aircraft resources from two or more adjoining dispatch centers are being committed to the same general area within the boundary zone:
 - Prompt initiation of a joint or shared Air Tactical Supervisor (Air Attack) will be considered.
 - If adjacent unit aircraft are known to be in the boundary zone, the approaching aircraft will establish air-to-air contact before entering the general area.
 - For an incident in progress, use of airtankers will be coordinated between adjoining dispatch centers.

- The identification of joint-use airspace or the possible need for a TFR within or overlapping the boundary zone will be negotiated between adjoining dispatch centers with input from the Unit Aviation Officers to establish safety control measures or implement a TFR. The use of an area defined by terrain features (e.g., rim-to-rim concept) should be strongly considered when establishing incident management, initial attack or airspace frequency areas. If possible, these areas should also be aligned with the TFR dimensions.
- For joint-use airspace situations, the involved dispatch centers will identify a common aircraft frequency. This could be one of the unit's assigned initial attack air-to-air frequencies, or a discrete frequency if a TFR is established, but must be identified prior to launching aircraft.
- During large fire operations, the initial attack area assigned to an Incident Management Team and the associated air travel routes within the boundary zone will be shared with the adjoining dispatch centers. When transitioning between incident management teams, the local unit aviation officers must ensure that this information is passed onto the incoming team members.

CARGO/PARA CARGO/GPS GUIDED PARA CARGO FLIGHTS

Order cargo/para cargo flights through standard dispatch channels from the host dispatch center to NRCC. Dispatch should be notified of the flight schedule. The host dispatch may contact the smokejumper duty officer to discuss para cargo delivery and retrieval options.

Para Cargo requests are ordered in IROC as an A #: Fixed Wing, Cargo.

GPS Guided Para Cargo may be available. Contact Smokejumper Operations prior to ordering to discuss availability and needs for the incident.

AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

All minor and major aircraft accidents and incidents will be reported by the unit authorizing or responsible for the flight. Report all information required to fill out the designated agency aircraft accident/incident form (SAFECOM), to the appropriate unit aviation officer or dispatcher who will, in turn, immediately forward to the Agency Aviation Officer.

The pilot of the aircraft is responsible to immediately notify all agencies required by applicable FAR's when an accident occurs.

The Agency Aviation Unit and Contracting Officer (if applicable) shall be consulted, prior to using any aircraft that has been involved in an accident or incident to ensure that all deficiencies have been corrected and the pilot/aircraft have been approved for further use.

Note: Center managers should review their office copy of the Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist quarterly for currency.

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